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PROGRESS OF THE WORLD

BY WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON

PERFECTION is not so often attained that we could afford to overlook the example of it which has been presented in the reception and entertainment of Professor Marie Sklodowska Curie in this country. We might adapt to the occasion the tribute which *Punch* many years ago paid to Joseph Chamberlain on what was probably the most trying episode of his career, that he had "said just what he ought to have said, and done what he ought to have done." There was no affected lion-worship, nor was there the slightest failure to recognize the surpassing greatness of the guest. All that was said and done was, we are sure, just what she would have liked, had it been given her to prescribe it in advance; which was of course, as we have suggested, the perfection of hospitality. Most felicitous was the presentation to her of a quantity of radium, of which, although she was its discoverer, she had not formerly possessed an atom; and equally felicitous—if there were a super-superlative we should use it—was her announcement that she should use the rich gift in study and experimentation for ridding the world of what has to-day become its most formidable and terror-bearing scourge, the protean-formed lesion of cancer. Memory fails to recall another visit of a distinguished guest to this country which was entitled to be regarded with more complete satisfaction than this.

Germany at the eleventh hour agreed to the demands of the Allies, and thus condemned herself beyond salvation. She had been protesting, down to the last moment, that the thing was impossible. But just as Ferdinand Foch was about to order a forward movement of the French army, she suddenly discovered that the impossible was entirely possible and indeed easy. So she began paying the indemnity. It is interesting to recall that July 14 next will be the fiftieth anniversary of France's payment.

of 500,000,000 francs to Germany as the first instalment of the tribute exacted from her in Bismarck's scheme to "bleed her white." That was just one-tenth of the total sum demanded, the amount of which had been fixed less than five months before. The last instalment was paid and the entire tribute liquidated, to Germany's vast chagrin, on September 5, 1873, about two and a half years after it was imposed, and the last detachment of the German army of occupation was then reluctantly withdrawn from French soil. The last place thus evacuated was Verdun, a fact which gave peculiar interest to the resolute resistance of that place to the attempted German reoccupation in the Great War. It is not unreasonable to reckon that the sum then exacted from France was, in the circumstances of that time, as formidable as that now demanded from Germany; the difference between them being not in amount but in the fact that the one was simply the blackmail-ransom demanded by a piratical conqueror, while the other is a just claim for reparation for merely a part of the damage and loss wantonly inflicted. Another difference, wide as the world, is seen between the way in which France promptly paid without demur, and that in which Germany, with an almost inconceivable resourcefulness in false pretenses, has tried to evade payment.

The Parliamentary elections in Italy resulted in a sweeping victory for the National Coalition party, which supports the ministry of Signor Giolitti. Perhaps the more gratifying way of regarding it is as a defeat for his opponents, to wit, the Socialists and Communists. These lost heavily, as they deserved to do. The election was held under the "*scrutin de liste*" plan, instead of the "*scrutin d'arrondissement*" which formerly prevailed, a fact which makes the result seem all the more impressive. Some credit for the result is no doubt to be given to the "Fascisti," who were active in the campaign. Their methods cannot always be approved, being too often based upon the dangerous principle of "fighting the Devil with fire," but their aims are admirable and inspiring. On the whole it is made clear that the Italian people are opposed to the subversive elements which have been trying—to adapt Gladstone's famous phrase about the Italian Bourbons

—to erect negation of all authority into Government. With this result decisively attained, and with much talk of economic and industrial improvement, the outlook for Italy is now more favorable than it has been for a number of years.

Within the course of a few hours the Nation was bereft of two of its most eminent, its most honored and its most useful citizens. As Interstate Commerce Commissioner and as Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane had served the nation for many years, with profit to everybody but himself. Entering that service with a competence, he became impoverished because the insufficiency of his salary compelled him to draw upon his personal means for support and his devotion to the public interests forbade him to divide his time between official duties and private enterprises, and he was driven to retire from the Cabinet in order to save himself and his family from actual penury. But he did so too late, work and anxiety ending his life before he could fairly begin to recoup his fortunes. It was a pathetic close of a career which for nearly a score of years had been distinguished for an efficiency, an integrity, and a blending of idealistic vision and of practical achievement seldom rivalled by a public servant in all our history. As a political and economic reformer, Senator, and Associate Justice and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Edward D. White made for himself a record which was about as nearly *sans peur et sans reproche* as anyone could hope to achieve in such a career. A strong partisan and a devout churchman, neither party nor creed ever swayed him in his service to the State, nor did any critic ever suspect him of political or sectarian bias. He honored the seat which had been occupied by Jay and Marshall, and confirmed the wisdom of those who gave to our Supreme Court its unique status as a branch of the Government coördinate with the President and the Congress. They were two great men, and great Americans.

Mr. Edison's questionnaires, which he himself prepared as tests of the competency of those seeking places in his employment, have provoked much discussion pro and contra, and no little merriment; and while they must be regarded as an egregious

example of *lucus a non lucendo*, they have doubtless served a useful purpose. In the main they are almost exactly the opposite of what they should be. They were far too much taken up with technical questions, ability to answer which would indicate chiefly either some specializing in study or a memory of the card-catalogue order, and contained too few questions calculated to test general intelligence, powers of observation, and the reasoning faculties. Thirty or forty years ago it was a common and not entirely undeserved criticism of the early competitive examinations for the Civil Service that candidates were asked to give the length of the longest river in Africa or the population of the largest city in Asia, instead of practical questions about the duties they were to perform in the public service of the United States. Mr. Edison has fallen into the same error; cluttering up his questionnaires with a multiplicity of matters with which the memory should not be taxed at all but which should be left for ascertainment when needed from convenient books of reference, to the neglect of those which would show the candidate's capacity to adapt himself successfully to the duties he seeks to perform. It is conceivable that a man might accurately commit to memory the whole of Napier's logarithms; but would it be worth while?

The President deemed it fitting, as indeed it was, to travel from Washington to New York to participate in celebrating the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of *The New York Commercial*, and made on that occasion a most felicitous address on the place, duties and responsibilities of the men who are leaders in business affairs. By interesting coincidence only a few days before a distinguished company of statesmen, men of letters, educators and publicists had assembled in Manchester, England, to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of *The Manchester Guardian* and the fiftieth anniversary of its present editor's connection with it. On both these occasions a wealth of appreciation was lavished upon the newspaper press, all of which was doubtless both sincere and deserved; though it is impossible to avoid the reflection that some of the eulogists might be quite as ready the next day to inveigh against the evils of the press, and

indeed that the papers which merit highest praise are not at all exempt from danger of incurring censure. Entirely apart from what is known and deprecated as "personal journalism," there is really no other profession quite so intensely personal, so human, as journalism, or so deeply marked with both the virtues and the frailties of human nature; a fact which was by no means least conspicuous in the tone of both these anniversary commemorations.

The change of administration in Cuba is more personal than political, and is significant chiefly as a confirmation and vindication of what has been done during the last eight years and as a promise of persistence in the same wise and profitable policy. The administration of President Menocal placed Cuba for the first time upon a sound governmental basis and gave the island a degree of substantial prosperity seldom attained by any other nation in comparable circumstances. President Zayas has the experience of affairs and the force of intellect and of character requisite to continue building upon the same foundation, and the whole tone and substance of his inaugural message indicated that he has also a resolute intention so to do. The part played by the United States, chiefly through General Crowder, in effecting this happy consummation has been as creditable to this country as it has been welcome to Cuba, and has afforded another vindication of the wisdom and mutual beneficence of the relationship between the two countries which was established by the Platt Amendment.

The amenities of intercourse were raised to the *n*th degree in the recent controversy between the Russian Council of the People's Commissaries (Bolshevists) and the International Federation of Trade Unions at Amsterdam. The Commissaries began it, through their chief, Mr. Zinovieff, who wrote from Riga to the Federation a letter in which he referred to the Federation as "your yellow Amsterdam Internationale," denied its claim to represent thirty million organized workers, and declared that it had "gone over, body and soul, to the mortal enemy, the bourgeoisie." To this the Federation, through a committee whose names are worthy of record, Messrs. Jouhaux, Mertens, Fimmen

and Oudegeest, responded: . . . "You do not even possess sufficient wit to vary your insults. Your vocabulary of epithets is copious, but it is as monotonous as the stories of famine and massacre in your land. . . . We know your system and your principles. We know how the Soviets are subordinated to the Communist party, and how the latter has created a new autocracy. We know the flourishing condition of the Russian proletariat and we know the prosperity conferred by your system—on paper. And we rejoice that Central and Western Europe are, in your opinion, not yet ripe for the perfect happiness which you would wish to confer upon them." From which we venture to assume that the International Federation of Trade Unions is not inclined to turn Bolshevik.

Shakespeare festivals at Stratford-on-Avon and at Weimar were coincident in time, though quite different in spirit. The German gathering again devoted itself to the effort to demonstrate the essential Germanism of Shakespeare, and to the pretense that nobody in the world appreciates his greatness as do the members of the Teutonic race. "Shakespeare," said Professor Max Foerster, "is a far more living factor of *Kultur* in Germany than in England"; which is one of the most amazing expressions of Teutonic obtuseness and lack of humor that we can recall. That Shakespeare has been studied and his dramas played in Germany more than in any other country of the world, with the one possible exception of England itself, is not to be disputed; a fact which is, however, to be credited not so much to the initiative of the Germans themselves as to that preëminently un-German Frenchman, Voltaire. It is equally indisputable that however the Germany of Richter, Lessing, Herder, Goethe and Schiller may have been in accord with Shakespeare, nothing could possibly be more antipathetic and antagonistic to the whole spirit and purport of his works than the *Kultur* of the Hohenzollerns, Haeckels and Bernhardis of our day.

To the untutored mind three things more remote from each other and more completely dissociated could scarcely be imagined than spots on the sun, the "Northern Lights," and the breaking

down of the telegraph system. Modern science recognizes them to be inseparably connected in a chain of cause and effect. The recent notable exhibition of the process was an impressive reminder of the existence of natural forces whose character and methods we are just beginning vaguely and rudimentarily to understand, but whose stupendous potency seems to be forever and completely beyond our control. Calculations of the distance and size of Betelgeuze and of the magnitude of interstellar spaces recently bewildered us with intimations of almost infinite vastness. The electrons of the sun spots and Aurora Borealis are a reminder of the almost infinitesimally small. Which of the two is the further beyond the power of the average mind to appreciate is a question which we should hesitate to answer.

The election and consecration of a new Bishop of New York, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, is an event of far more than local and ecclesiastical interest. In the case of Dr. Manning the interest was considerably heightened by the extraordinary attempt which was made, by abhorrent forces outside of the Church, to defeat his election on political and racial grounds. This of course most egregiously and contemptibly failed, and its net result was to commend the new Bishop more strongly to the favor and confidence of the community and the nation, regardless of party, creed or race. Another enhancement of interest was due to the invited presence, in a conspicuous place in the ecclesiastical procession at the consecration ceremony, of a number of eminent clerical representatives of the chief non-Episcopal denominations; an auspicious suggestion of the possibility of systematic inter-church coöperation, if not of actual merger.

The astounding report was made, on authority, at the recent conference on highway traffic held at Yale University, that in the nineteen months during which we were at war with Germany, while only about 48,000 men were killed in battle or died of wounds, 91,000 persons, 25,000 of them being school children, were killed, chiefly by motor vehicles, on the public streets and roads of the United States. This appalling loss of life was attributed in great part to the lack of uniformity in traffic regula-

tions, and to the lack of training of the officers who are charged with the control of traffic in cities. There is little doubt that it is also due to the variegated inefficiency of the laws regulating the driving of motor cars. A recent authoritative survey discloses an amazing lack of uniformity in automobile laws and rules, and a discreditable laxity in many States in fixing the qualifications of drivers of such vehicles. Thus in six States there are no examinations whatever to determine drivers' fitness or ability; in three, examinations are "optional"; in nine, chauffeurs only are examined; in three, certificates of competence are required; and in five, all drivers, whether chauffeurs or owners, are examined. In one State chauffeurs must be over twenty-one years old, and in five they must be eighteen. As to owners who drive their own cars, as well as chauffeurs and all other operators, in two States they must be eighteen, in seven they must be sixteen, in three they must be fifteen, and in three they are permitted to be as young as fourteen. There is a similar lack of uniformity in license fees and taxes on cars. In thirty-seven States there are no fees whatever for owners, in the remaining eleven the fees vary from fifty cents to \$4. In fourteen States there are no fees for chauffeurs, while in the other thirty-four the fees range from \$1 to \$5. Taxes on the smallest cars, of from 20 to 24 horsepower, range from \$3 to \$15, while a number of States levy uniform taxes on all cars regardless of size, these taxes ranging from \$2 to \$10. Under such a hotch-potch, hit-or-miss system, there is a yearly death-roll of more than 57,000 persons. To say that it was impracticable to lessen that mortality would be to deny our possession of common sense; to tolerate such slaughter longer would be to incur grave reflections upon our humanity and upon our economy.